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## ON "INTERMEDIATE SYLLABLES."

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1. "Questions about the *Intermediate Syllable* arise in the minds of all beginners whose attention has once been called to the subject."—Thus *Prof. Dodd* commences his learned paper in the first number of this Monthly. But right here it may be questioned whether the special attention of beginners ought to be called to such phonological niceties which affect neither Hebrew orthography nor Hebrew grammar proper, and which do not at all affect the sense and meaning of words and sentences. Of course, where the etymological composition of a word is to be exhibited, the word must be divided accordingly. In Hebrew, however, this can never be the purpose of syllabication. If with reference to Hebrew we raise such questions, it can only be for the purpose of showing the pronunciation, which is supposed to be correct, or, in some cases, for the purpose of deciding whether a Dāghēsh-lene should be employed, or should be omitted, in a following aspirate (בגדכפת). But whose ear is so fine that he can distinguish, whether a reader or speaker enounces *form-al* or *for-mal*? Who makes, in reading Hebrew, an audible or otherwise perceptible distinction between Mīz-môr and Mī-z'môr? In reality, it makes, in the majority of cases, no difference whether we read the syllables, so happily designated by *Dr. Dodd* as *intermediate*, in the manner indicated by the learned Professor, or whether we do not so. We perceive no difference in fluent reading between qīt-lû and qī-ṭ'lû (Imp. Qāl). As to the orthography and meaning, there is, as said above, no difference and no difficulty whatever.

2. But if we wish to be perfectly accurate, what is the proper syllabication, qīt-lû, or qī-ṭ'lû? The surest and easiest way to reach an answer is, to go by analogy. Let us take a verb whose third radical letter is an aspirate, and see how the corresponding form sounds. We find then : שָׁכַר, the כ being rāphé, i. e. being without a Dāghēsh-lene, the word is to be read thus : shī-kh'bhû; similarly : rī-dh'phû, &c. Consequently we must likewise syllabify : qī-ṭ'lû; though the first syllable has a short vowel and is unaccented.

3. In the foregoing lines we had as examples verbs in the Imperative Qāl. Let us select now words of another class,—Infinitives with one of the inseparable prepositions (בכ"ל) prefixed. How have we to syllabify :—bīq-tōl, kīq-tōl, līq-tōl? or : bī-q'tōl, kī-q'tōl, lī-q'tōl? We apply the same process. We look for a verb whose second radical is one of the aspirates. We find בָּנַל, בָּנַל, with the פ rāphé; but לָנַל, with the פ Dāghēsh-lene. We find similarly כָּשַׁב, כָּתַב, and likewise לָסַפַּד, לָשַׁבַּב, &c. We would therefore also syllabify : bī-q'tōl, kī-q'tōl, and—līq-tōl. And thus, in order to be very accurate we would syllabify : bī-sh'nāth, &c., in accordance with the readings : bī-dh'bhār, bī-s'phāth, &c.

4. Let us proceed yet a little further in collecting examples before we venture upon laying down general rules; for thereby we follow the true Baconian inductive method. In the words כָּרַמִּי, קָדְרִי (the construct of כָּרְמִים, קָדְרִים), are the first syllables closed ones, or "intermediate" ones? As we find דָּרְכִי, בָּנַלְּי, יָקְדִי, מָלְכִי, with no Dāghēsh in the third letter, we must conclude

that in all these words the first syllables are the so-called intermediate syllables (therefore : *kă-r'mê*, &c.).

5. For similar considerations we must read *Yīts-hāq*, and not *Yī-ts'hāq*, since in the name *יְהִיחָא* (which is of the same grammatical construction, and which we take as our model) the third letter (ת) has a *Dāghēsh*, and the preceding letter closes a syllable. We syllabify : *Mībh-tāh*, in analogy with *mīdh-bār*; *āl-mān*, *qīn-yān*, &c., in analogy with *qōr-bān*, &c.

6. Have we now, after all these examples, sufficient material upon which to base general rules, according to which we may say, In this case the unaccented syllable with a short vowel is closed, and in that case it is *intermediate*? Upon first thought it may seem so. If we are satisfied with the knowledge of the *facts*, and if we do not desire to rack our minds to find the deeper *reasons* for them, we might say, Let us open our Hebrew Bible, and let us compare analogous word-forms containing one of the letters בּגדכפּת; let us, in doubtful cases, see whether a *Mēthēgh* will indicate to us how to divide the word properly. But when once we become engaged in such research, we shall soon find that we stand upon slippery ground, and that even our Massoretic text, which, as such, is in general almost beyond any doubt and dispute, leaves us quite at a loss as to *Mēthēghs*. *Dāghēsh-lenes*, *Māqqēphs*, and other such points of minor importance. The most careful editors of the Bible, scholars who have thoroughly studied the whole field of the Massorah, have had to admit this. At the end of the so-called Rabbinical Bibles there are to be found several folio pages full of "Different Readings by Ben-Asher and Ben-Naphtali," and also several pages full of "Different readings by the *Madinaḥē* (an Eastern, or Babylonian, school of Massorites) and *Ma'arbaē* (a Western, or Palestinian school of Massorites)." The differences of the last named schools concern then and now the consonant-text. The *Madinaḥē* and *Ma'arbaē* disagree among other points also in a considerable number of cases in regard to full or defective spelling of the words, and the like. But Ben-Asher and Ben-Naphtali differ mostly in regard to *Mēthēghs*, *Māqqēphs*, accent-signs, *Dāghēshes*, &c. We select at random some of such different readings, in which the one demands an intermediate, and the other a closed syllable. In Gen. xxxii., 18, Ben-Asher reads *יִפְגֹּשֶׁךְ* (*yī-ph'ghā-sh'khā*) and Ben-Naphtali reads *יִפְגֹּשֶׁךְ* (*yīph-gā-sh'khā*); in Gen. xlii., 30, Ben-Asher reads *כְּמִרְגְּלִים*, and Ben-Naphtali *כְּמִרְגְּלִים* (with a *Mēthēgh* at the side of the *Kāph*); in Ex. vi., 27, Ben-Asher reads

*הַמְדַּבְּרִים*, and Ben-Naphtali *הַמְדַּבְּרִים* (in both these readings the מ has not the *Dāghēsh-forte* which would be required by a well known general grammatical rule, and this is also one of the many Massoretic curiosities); in Num. xxi., 4, Ben-Asher reads *לִסְבָּב*, and Ben-Naphtali *לִסְבָּב*; in 1 Sam. xxii., 19, Ben-Asher *לִפְנֵעַ*, and Ben-Naphtali *לִפְנֵעַ*; in Ps. xlix., 15, Ben-Asher reads *לִישְׂאוֹל*, and Ben-Naphtali *לִישְׂאוֹל*; *Ibid.* lxxx., 11, Ben-Asher *אֶרְצִי*, Ben-Naphtali *אֶרְצִי*; *Ibid.*, xcvi., 11, Ben-Asher *יִרְעֵם*, Ben-Naphtali *יִרְעֵם*. It would be easy to multiply largely these selections.

7. Besides these different readings of Ben-Asher and Ben Naphtali we shall find records of such and similar disagreements in other places. Any one who examines either the marginal or the larger Massorah; or who opens such more or less minute Massoretical commentaries and annotations as the 'En Haqqorè by

Jequthiel Hakkohen ben Jehuda (י"הב), or the Or Tora by Menaḥem de Lonzano, or the Minhath Shay by Solomon Norzi, or the Tiqqun Sophrim by Solomon Dubno, and numerous other works; or who peruses some of the very large number of works, or parts of works, on Niqqudh by the Jewish grammarians since the days of Juda Ḥayyug down to W. Heidenheim and S. D. Luzzatto; or who takes cognizance of the hundreds of different readings in the manuscripts collected by Kennicott, De Rossi, Firkovitsch, and others,—will soon conclude that we shall hardly be able to lay down general rules for these nice points of Hebrew phonology, covering all cases. It is true that in the Infinitive Qāl with a prefixed Lāmēdh the first syllable is *mostly* a closed one, as Prof. Dodd has already noticed. But he himself remarks also that “exceptions will be found;” and how many! Thus the Infinitive לִצְנָא is found three times in the Bible, viz., in Num. iv., 23; viii., 24; and in Isa. xxxi., 4. On the last named place the marginal Massorah remarks: לִית כוּוּתִיה רִנֵּשׁ וּשְׂאִרֵי רִפִּין. There is no other לִצְנָא extant like this, in which the letter כ has a Dāghēsh, in the other two passages the כ is rāphé.

So we find that the second radical letter is also rāphé in the words לִנְתִּישׁ וּלְנִתִּישׁ (Jer. i., 10), and so it is in some other instances of words of this class.

As some other examples of irregularities we note: בִּשְׁכֵן (Gen. xxxv., 22), כִּנְכֹר (Jer. xvii., 2), where we should have expected to find בִּשְׁכֵן and כִּזְכֹר. We note furthermore: חֲסִדִי in the editions of the Psalms by the painstaking Massoretical scholars W. Heidenheim, S. Baer, and others, while the same editors have constantly and uniformly עֲבָדִי. Hă-s'dhê, or Hăṣ-dê? It deserves to be noticed that even W. Heidenheim, accurate as he was in such matters of punctuation, seems not to have been certain which was correct. In his several editions of the Pentateuch to which the Haphtaroth (the pericopes from the prophetic books read in the Synagogues) are added, chap. lxi. of Isaiah appears as Haphtarath to Section Nitzzabhim, and there the learned editor has the following footnote:

חֲסִדִי, thus the word is found in ancient manuscripts, the Hêth with a Mēthēgh and the Dālêth rāphé; and so it is in all other places where this word occurs.—And yet in his editions of the Psalms Heidenheim has constantly חֲסִדִי!

We may in this connection further mention that, according to the Massorah, in the words מִקְצֵה, מִקְצָה, wherever they are found in the Bible, the ק is without the Dāghēsh. The Dāghēsh is also omitted after the article in such words as לְעֵלִים, לְשִׁפְנִים, לְמִלְדוֹת, הִישׁוּעָה, הַצַּרְדִּיעִים, הַמָּטָר, הַמְדַּבֵּר &c., &c. Have we now in the first syllable of these words in place of acute syllables “intermediate syllables”?

A noteworthy difference in punctuation we find in the word רַעֲמָסִס. In Ex. i., 11 the word reads רַעֲמָסִס (Ră-‘ām-sēs), and in Gen. xlvii., 11; Ex. xii., 37; Num. xxxiii., 35 it reads רַעֲמָסִס (Ră-‘m-sēs). Aben Ezra, and others, have in consideration of these discrepancies expressed the opinion that there must have been two רַעֲמָסִס in Egypt.

8. We are totally at a loss concerning the proper reading when we meet certain proper nouns, for which we cannot easily find parallel forms, and in which no aspirate is contained, which might give us a clue as to the correct

reading. We know well enough how to syllabify עֶרְפָּה (Ruth i., 4) = Or-pāh; דְּלָפֹן (Est. ix., 7) = Dă-l'phôn. But how is it with צִפְנִית and אֶסְנֶת (Gen. xli., 45)? Shall we read Tsā-ph'nāth, 'A-s'nāth? Or Tsôph-nāth, 'Oṣ-nāth? According to Norzi, the Mēthēgh appearing under these words in most of the editions is not undisputed. And now who shall decide?

9. We have thus far spoken of uncertainties in our Massoretic text, and have referred to the records of different readings, to discrepancies in the manuscripts, &c. But this is not all. Within the last forty years old Bible manuscripts have been discovered in the Crimea and elsewhere in the Orient which have a system of punctuation quite at variance in form, position, &c., from the system we possess. We have the Palestinian or the Tiberias punctuation. The newly discovered system is, in distinction from ours, called the Babylonian or Assyrian punctuation. In 1844 a fac-simile of a part of an Odessa MS., containing the book of Habakkuk, was published by Pinner. And by this publication knowledge of that strange ancient punctuation reached for the first time the Semitic scholars of Western Europe and America. Since then *Prof. Strack* and others have published in fac-simile larger parts of these ancient MSS. with the "Assyrian" pointing. If we now compare the readings preserved in these MSS. with our Massoretic readings, we shall also be forced to the conclusion that in a number of less important points our text is an uncertain one.

10. After this digression we return to the subject of "Intermediate Syllables." The books lay it down as a rule that an unaccented open syllable can never have a short vowel. But in reality we meet quite a number of words which do not accord with this rule, and we are embarrassed. How is this? we ask. Do we not read mā-l'khê, dī-bh'rê, lī-q'ṭâ? Are here not unaccented open syllables with short vowels? Grammarians answer in various ways. Some say, the first syllables in these words must not be taken as open syllables; they are half-open, or, as others call them, half-closed, or, as *Prof. Dodd* calls them, intermediate syllables. *Gesenius* evades the difficulty in another way; he says, the Sh'vâ on the boundary line of the two syllables is neither a silent nor a vocal Sh'vâ; it is a Sh'vâ *medium*. The Jewish grammarian *Solomon Hanau*, who lived in the first half of the eighteenth century, and who was a very prolific author of meritorious grammatical works, explained the difficulty by another theory. He said that the Pättāḥs, the Sēghôls, the Hîrēqs, the Qāmēts-hāṭûphs, &c., in the syllables under consideration are in reality not short vowels; they stand where strictly Sh'vâ should stand; and he gave them a special name, he called them תְּנוּעוֹת קָלוֹת, *light vowels*. So, e. g., he said, מְלִכִּי, a derivative of מְלָכִים, should properly be מְלִכִּי, but this being a phonetic impossibility the first Sh'vâ becomes a T'nû'ā qällāḥ, and in this case a Pättāḥ is inserted; לְקָטוּ is derived from לִקְטַח, and should really be לְקָטוּ, but in this case too the first Sh'vâ had to be eliminated, and a T'nû'ā qällāḥ, here a Hîrēq, took its place. *Ben-Zeeb*, the author of the *Talmudh L'shon Ibhri*, accepted the theory of *S. Hanau*. Others, equally eminent or more eminent as grammarians, would not adopt this theory.

11. But rather than subscribe to any of these and similar explanations it would probably be better to go back to those theories of Hebrew vowels and Hebrew syllabication prevailing among the Sephardic grammarians in ante-Qimḥi times, say before the year 1200. They did not speak of long vowels and short vowels; they did not teach that any Sh'vâ occurring after a Qāmēts, or af-

ter a Hölēm, or a Shûrêq, or a Tsērê, or a Hîrêq with a Yôdh, *must* be a vocal Sh'vâ, &c. In accordance with the actual facts of that Semitic language, they taught that the Hebrew possesses three fundamental vowels (Abu'l-Walid, in his *Risâlat et-Taqrîb*—recently published in the *Opycules d'Abou'l-Walid*, by J. & H. Derenbourg, Paris, 1880—calls these principal vowels Shureq, Hiriq, Pathah; Juda Hallevi, in his book *Cuzari*, calls them Qamotz, P'thiha, Shebher; Aben Ezra, in his book *Tzaḥoth*, has for these fundamental vowels the names: Holem, Hiriq, Pathah-gadhol; others have other names for them). By a process of subdivision the ancient grammarians came then to enumerate seven vowels. They called them the seven kings (מלכים), and the Sh'vâ they called the servant (משרת). In regard to vocal Sh'vâ and silent Sh'vâ they differed also from more modern grammarians. Aben Ezra did not divide the word תִּשְׁבִּי into the two syllables tē-sh'bhî, as we do, but he said that the word had to be read, tēsh-bhî; and in the above-mentioned book *Tzaḥoth* he called the great Hebrew poet Solomon ben Gabirol to account for his dissolving, in one of his hymns, the word תִּשְׁבִּי into a T'nû'ă and a Yāthēdh (i. e. into a syllable without, and one with a vocal Sh'vâ). With the three Qimḥi's (Joseph and his two sons: Moses and David) a new period commenced in the history of the science of Hebrew Grammar. The Qimḥi's lived in the Provence, among Christians, who spoke a Romance dialect, and whose better classes cultivated the study of the Latin. Arabic the Qimḥi's did not understand, as their Jewish brethren on the other side of the Pyrenees did, who lived among Arabic-speaking Moors. Influenced by the Latin and the Provencale, and partly guided by the pattern of Latin Grammar, Joseph Qimḥi, and after him his sons, reconstructed the Hebrew grammar upon a new basis. While the Sephardic Jews had formed their grammatical system after the Arabic grammar (and they were right in this, for the central Semitic Hebrew is certainly more closely connected with the Southern Semitic Arabian Language than it is with the Latin), the Qimḥi's began a new departure in Hebrew grammar. In doing so they imitated, consciously or unconsciously, the system of Latin Grammar in as far as it was feasible. They knew that Latin had five vowels which were either long or short, and also long and short syllables, &c., and so they carried corresponding theories over into the Hebrew. Was a real progress in Hebrew philology effected thereby? There are many now who doubt this. But be this as it may, so much is certain, that Qimḥic influences were soon widely felt, and Qimḥic grammatical doctrines were soon generally taught and are still taught and still adhered to in our present age.

12. Concerning the uncertainties and doubtful readings of the Massoretic text we would advance yet some additional remarks, before we conclude. These uncertainties, numerous as they are, are after all but the exceptions, and concern mostly such unimportant matters as Māqqēph, or Mēthēgh, or Dāghēsh-lene, and the like. In the main, the Massoretic text is, as such, above dispute, and is, critically considered, a good text. But how must we explain its many puzzling peculiarities? Why is there here the spelling of a word "full" and in another place "defective"? Why is there here a Mēthēgh, and there, none? Why is there here a Mûnāḥ, and in another verse of the same grammatical construction, instead thereof a Mērkā? Such questions can be asked almost without number. It seems to me that the most correct answer to these questions lies in the statement that the Massorites and Naqdanim came to their

final conclusions *firstly*, by retaining the text which they found in the majority of the manuscripts before them, and which they copied most scrupulously and faithfully. There is an old historical tradition, that the Massorites, when they had three manuscripts before them, of which two agreed and one disagreed, accepted the reading of the two. (Jerus. Ta'anith iv., 2; Soph<sup>r</sup>rim vi., 4; &c.). *Secondly*, when the manuscripts left them in doubt, or when those of them who acted as Naqdanim were about to add their diacritical points, vowel-signs, accent-signs, and it was found that traditions in this regard had become beclouded, then they made their conclusions according to their own rational considerations and best judgment. Here and there they may have been led by deeper considerations; here and there they may have punctuated the text so as to harmonize it with the halachic or hagadic teachings of their times. But as to Mäqqēph, Mēthēgh, and Dāghēsh-lene, accident may have guided the pens of the earlier punctators almost everywhere. It was with them, as it is with us. We often write a comma, where we just as well make a semicolon; we often put an exclamation point, where we just as well might omit it. And yet in a few instances the punctators may have had their well-weighed reasons for their seeming abnormities. They may, in some places, have put in a Mäqqēph, or omitted a Dāghēsh-lene, for reasons which to them may have appeared as exceedingly important. We give here one or two examples. In Ps. II., 12 the words נשקן-בר are brought into a closer connection by a Mäqqēph. *Jellinek* (in his *Beth Hammidhrash* Vol. V. p. XIII) suggests that this little Mäqqēph was a protest of the Massorites against the messianic conception of the verse by the Christian "Fathers," who translated בר by "son"; in order now to have it distinctly understood that בר is but an adverbial addition to נשקן, and that it should be translated by "purely," a Naqdan put between the two words that 'small dash, Mäqqēph. In Ex. xv., 11 the first Kāph in the first מִי-כִמְכָּה is rāphé, and the first Kāph in the second מִי כִמְכָּה has a Dāghēsh-lene. This insignificant Dāghēsh was considered already hundreds of years ago as being "*tendenziös*," i. e. as having a well considered purpose. Some Rabbis of the later Middle Ages were of the opinion that the Dāghēsh was inserted with the following intention. If the Kāph would be rāphé, a reader or listener would be reminded, by the very sound of the words, of that idol-worshiper Micah, who is spoken of in Judges xvii., and this had to be prevented. *Geiger* (Urschrift p. 293) gives another and a more plausible reason for this Dāghēsh. But as this article has become longer than the writer intended it should be, we merely refer those interested to *Geiger's* work which is easily enough accessible.

Other points might have been noticed, but the lack of space forbids.